

April 6, 2018

To whom it concerns:

Denture services are highly needed here in Montana. Many Montanans rely on dentures. Dentures are not just an esthetic need; they are needed for everyday living. Without dentures, diets tend to be very poor which leads to many health problems.

The most common reason for tooth loss is periodontal disease. Inflammation from this gum disease can cause problems in the rest of the body. Health issues such as weight loss, severe gum disease, cardiovascular disease, dementia (poor oral health can affect the brain), respiratory infections, diabetes, pregnancy complications, cancer, kidney disease, rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes are a result of poor dental health.

A large number of our senior citizens are unable to afford the cost to repair their dentures, let alone maintain them. Many are living on fixed incomes that consist of social security alone. This barely covers the cost of renting an apartment let alone prescription costs, food, utilities, healthcare bills, etc. Time and time again I see people walk away because they simply cannot afford teeth. Seniors in care center facilities many times do not have the funding to get dentures and this continually leads to blended, soft-food diets, weight loss and other health issues.

With MT Medicaid not covering dental crowns, recipients are usually forced to have infected teeth extracted. Because many cannot afford the cost of dentures, they often choose not to have the teeth extracted. Leaving infected teeth in their mouth, again, leads to health issues.

Over time, these health issues are going to cost the state more money than the cost of dentures and regularly maintaining dentures for the people in need of Montana.

With many younger individuals, not having teeth makes it difficult to seek and obtain employment. Being unemployed, many of these citizens will rely on the state for income, food and other medical services. People without teeth tend to lose self-confidence which can lead to depression, self-doubt and ultimately remaining unemployed.

Montanans will never get ahead without this necessary care and will continue to cost the state more money through other Medicaid and state services. We are only adding to the problem by not providing denture services to our citizens.

Our offices, as well as many others, have been providing services to those who cannot afford them, but this is something that is becoming costly and we have to turn patients away who are unable to pay. This is not an easy thing to do, as we all strive to provide quality care to every one of our patients.

Dentures are not just cosmetic. They are required to perform a necessary function to live. Eating is not a need; it is a necessity. I request you reinstate denture services to all citizens, or at very least, those elderly, disabled and/or living in care facilities.

Thank you for your time,

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